

STET CAPITOLIUM FULGENS.

INAUGURATION
OF
THE STATE CAPITOL
AT
DES MOINES, IOWA,

ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE TWENTIETH GENERAL
ASSEMBLY BY

Hon. JOHN A. KASSON,

UPON INVITATION OF THE GOVERNOR AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY,
JANUARY 17, 1884.

PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

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THE NEW CAPITOL.

Gentlemen of the General Assembly, Officers of State, and Fellow Citizens:

For the people of Iowa, and especially for you, their representatives in the Executive, Legislative and Judicial departments, this day may well be devoted to congratulations. The people will rejoice that this great structure, now so near completion, has been erected with economy, honesty, and sound judgment, and without special taxation, or debt. Their representatives rejoice that they can now enter into appropriate halls with abundance of heaven's pure air and clear light, and with suitable chambers for the important work of their committees. Their Executive and Judicial officers have special reason to be glad that they are soon to leave the inconvenient and insecure quarters hitherto assigned them, for the safe and spacious rooms where fire cannot destroy, where thieves cannot easily break through and steal, and where moth and rust are far less likely to corrupt. All our people, in public or in private life, will to-day experience profound gratification that all the high authorities of government, the elect of their suffrage, enter in their name into the possession of a State House befitting the intelligence and the wealth, the dignity and the worth of a State which is justly proud of her record of good government. It is the third time that the State has taken possession of a Capitol building. As the immigrating farmer willingly passes his first difficult years in a cabin of logs, and when his family is better grown, and the tide of steady prosperity has enriched him, erects a

substantial dwelling in which, as he hopes, his children, and their children after them, may preserve his name and virtues in lasting memory, so Iowa, passing from her earlier official cabins, has devoted a part of her increasing wealth to the erection of this enduring mansion for the residence of her elected government during generations to come.

Our first prayer beneath this high dome is, that here the moral and political foundations of this imperial State may be so deeply and so wisely laid that remote generations shall recall and celebrate the wisdom and the virtues of their ancestors who in the nineteenth century erected and occupied this solid mansion of the State.

It is for us all a source of profound gratification that from the day when the present Commissioners assumed control, with their accomplished Superintendent of Construction, the legislative bodies have never withdrawn from them their confidence. Not one act of speculation or spoliation, not one coin wasted or vainly spent, has defaced the bright record of their administration. It shall be a part of the legacy we leave to our children that all these vast and durable walls have been laid in the cement of honesty, and built by the rule of fidelity. More proud of this legend are we, than of all these classic columns and brilliant domes which please the eye and gratify the taste.

As this house of the government has been erected in integrity, without turmoil or disorder, so may neither corruption nor violence ever appear within its chambers. Let nothing be ever here transacted against patriotism, religion, morality or education, nor against the just principles of civil liberty, or public or private right. As the wheels of time roll on, as generations of men arise, act their part, and decay, may each generation represented in these halls leave to its posterity a newly enriched inheritance of order, liberty, and justice. Let us cherish the hope that for centuries to come the eyes of happy Industry shall see with joy the beams of the rising day play-

ing upon these bright domes; and that there also, well-rewarded Labor may look with contentment upon the rays of the declining sun, when the evening hour brings its welcome repose to toil.

This noble Capitol to-day becomes a monument between two eras in the history of Iowa, dividing the frontier transitory record of the State from its grander history begun with the census of 1880. The past of our State presents a brief record which is within the memory of living men. No misty traditions of antiquity have either obscured or illuminated our course. We have lived chiefly in our anticipated future, to which we have sought to give form and reality. When the bell of Independence Hall rang out the peal of Liberty in 1776, Iowa was unknown, except as a land whose borders had been discovered by the French. When Spain ceded the region to Napoleon, and Napoleon in turn ceded it to the United States in 1803, it was still unexplored, unknown, and nameless. First attached in 1804, under the name of the "District of Louisiana," to the jurisdiction of the Territory of Indiana, it became, in 1805, part of the Territory of Louisiana, and in 1812, by change of name, part of the Territory of Missouri. In 1834 all the country north of the State of Missouri and west of the Mississippi river, as far as the Missouri and White Earth rivers, was attached to the Territory of Michigan. Two years later, in 1836, Wisconsin Territory was created, and embraced all that had so lately been transferred to the jurisdiction of Michigan. After two years more, in 1838, the Territory of Iowa was established, including what are now the States of Iowa and Minnesota and a large section of Dakota. Seven years later, in 1845, Congress offered to admit us as a State by the side of Florida, on certain conditions, which established our western boundary at longitude 17 degrees, 30 minutes west of Washington, separating from us the entire Missouri "slope." This our people wisely refused; and finally, in December, 1846, Congress extended our

western boundary to the proper limit of the Missouri river, and Iowa became one of these United States. Thus, only thirty-seven years ago, Iowa with 130,000 people and two representatives became a member of this great Union of States, which she now supports with nearly two millions of loyal people, with eleven representatives in Congress, with over 21,000 school-houses, more than 22,000 teachers, and 464,000 pupils; and with a greater proportion of her people able to read than is shown by any other State of the Union.

This record becomes the more notable when it is remembered that the very hill upon which this Capitol stands, and all the valleys and plains for many leagues around, were forty years ago in the occupation of the aboriginal tribes. All this fair domain between the two great rivers of the continent was in the possession of roving or resident tribes until 1830. In that year the relinquishment of the Indian title began by a treaty which covered, with ill-defined boundaries, all the region west of the divide between the Des Moines and Missouri rivers, as far north as the forks of the Des Moines river, and thence westward, taking in the valleys of the Boyer, Little Sioux, and Floyd rivers, to which was added a strip extending northeastward to the Mississippi river. These concessions were made by the Ioways, Otoes, Omahas, Missourias, Sacs and Foxes, and four bands of Sioux, all of whom claimed rights in the districts relinquished to the United States. The Sioux separately ceded a strip of territory twenty miles wide running from the Mississippi river below La Crosse southwesterly to the Des Moines river, on which cession are now found the towns of Cresco, Osage, Charles City, and others as far as Dakotah City. The Sacs and Foxes ceded a like strip immediately adjoining it on the south, on which are now many towns, embracing Waukon, West Union, Postville, and others to Fort Dodge. This double concession, forty miles in width, formed a neutral zone between alien tribes. All of Iowa north of these con-

cessions was claimed by different bands of the Sioux until 1851, when their relinquishment was obtained. But these first concessions in 1830 seem to have been made not so much in the interest of the whites as to prevent wars among the Indian tribes, disputing their respective rights to that territory. The advancing tide of immigration, however, was by this time ready to cross our great Mediterranean river, and open up the country on its western bank. The Sacs and Foxes yielded to its demands, and in 1832 gave to white settlement a district equal to two or three tiers of counties up and down the Mississippi. Again, in 1837, they yielded to further pressure, and gave up one and a quarter million of acres along the Cedar and Iowa rivers, including their chief's, Keokuk's, village. This still left all central Iowa south of Fort Dodge and as far west as the Missouri water-shed, in possession of the allied tribes, who numbered, all told, about two thousand two hundred and fifty souls. But the friendly character of these red men had given opportunity to the whites to hear of these clear skies, this fruitful soil, and these wooded streams, and even to see these lands of promise, and so to covet them. Under the influence of the progressive human tide pressing on from the east, in 1842 they finally threw themselves into the arms of the Federal Government to choose for them a new home further west; and agreed to surrender all their immemorial heritage in three years from that time. When, at midnight following the eleventh day of October, 1845, the signal gun from Fort Des Moines, on yonder point, announced the end of all aboriginal right, the last of these faithful tribes had left their ancestral grounds forever, and the complicated law of the white man succeeded to the simple usages of the native tribes. And so was the very ground now covered by the shadow of these walls transferred from the dominion of Asiatic tribal organization to the control of our European Christian civilization.

These tribes of Sacs and Foxes were among the best Indians of their race. The testimony of our frontiersmen, and the official records of the Government describe them as thoroughly entitled to the respect of our race. The United States agent at the Raccoon Agency, just before their migration, attributes to them "the manly virtues and innate principles of honor and honesty." After their migration, the agent speaks in his reports of their "fidelity and regard for truth, their sense of honor and honesty, and pride of person and Nation." It should be told to our children that these sons of the soil to whom we have succeeded left behind them a noble name for manly virtues which we may well desire to emulate. Would that my voice might reach them now with these words of praise; and that they might be consoled for the loss of this Edenland of their ancient possession by knowing that the ground over which they roamed to find food for little more than two thousand souls, now gives home and food to near two million souls, under the protection of the same Great Spirit who rules both them and us.

Those of us who have known the liberal pleasures as well as the struggles of the spacious frontier life, the invigorating contests with wild nature and wilder beasts, the simpler manly virtues which it develops, the self-reliance, personal independence and courage which spring spontaneous from it, may well indulge a feeling of sympathy in the passing away of those tribes who had for centuries enjoyed that life along these running waters, under the shade of these oaks and walnuts, and over these blossoming prairies, where some of us once wandered with gun and fishing-rod in the days that have fled with the game. Shall the restless and eager life of the white man be sweeter than the life of the peaceful savage whom we have displaced—savage only to his enemies? Shall our greed of wealth be more profitable to the human soul than his greed of game? Shall truer virtue be found in our speculating marts of trade and in our

crowded bins and stockyards, than that which was nourished in the sheltered tents of the red men, and under the influence of the brilliant heavens that beamed over their unplowed prairies? Shall the means of personal happiness, now far removed from the simplicities of nature, be more fruitful for us than they were for them as they reposed on the very breast of Nature? Let the philosopher who shall live at the close of the twentieth century answer these questions.

As the Indian with bow and arrow disappeared in the west, the frontiersmen advanced from the east with axe and plow. They gathered around the meeting of the rivers in this valley, and believed they could see even then the dawning aurora of a brilliant future. They eagerly expected the rising sun of prosperity. But oh, the weary waiting for its coming! The cold blasts of winter, the overfloodings of the streams in spring, the unsold harvests of the autumn, the tedious roads to market, the hopeless improvement of navigation, the tired expectancy of promised railways! Old settlers of Central Iowa, you remember the years that seemed decades, the decade that seemed a century. But we now hail the risen sun. The long expected time of prosperity has come. Instead of struggling wains, dragged by worn beasts over miring roads and across swollen streams, there now depart each day from beneath the shadow of this Capitol eighty trains of cars, propelled by a tireless power, and laden with busy men, or with the wealth of State and Nation, over iron ways radiating to all points of the compass, directed to the interior of a continent or to the shores of two oceans, and to markets in foreign lands. Instead of dangerous fords, iron bridges span our streams. Tall groves and houses of comfort defy the wintry blasts of our prairies. Churches and school-houses illuminate the country and beautify the towns. The joy of this time would be complete if it had pleased Heaven to

spare the lives of all our hardy pioneers to see this day. They were the daring scouts of civilization—these early settlers who bore the severest hardships of the struggle, and opened the way for the happier multitude who now enjoy the ripened fruits of their planting. All hail to the memory of these departed, and a living welcome to you who survive! May Heaven long preserve you in the well-earned comfort of your declining years.

Taking leave of our past, what shall be our future in the history of the Republic? Shall we grow into a powerful member of this great Union of States, or bury ourselves in the fatness of our fruitful fields and populous pastures? The real facts which most concern our personal comfort and happiness are undoubtedly those which have for their scene our hearths, our farms, our churches, schools, and workshops. But these are rarely gathered up by the pen of history. It is the larger community, the State, which embodies the resulting character of all this local training; the State, which has its own roofter and hearthstone, preserves its own records, and develops a character of its own;—it is the State which passes into history, and by its perpetual record conveys to posterity the impressions which they shall entertain of their ancestors. The Legislature of the little emigrant colony of Plymouth, over two hundred years ago, declared: "Forasmuch as the maintenance of good literature doth much tend to the advancement of the weal and flourishing state of societies and republics, this court doth, therefore, order that in whatever township in this government, consisting of fifty families or upwards, any meet man shall be obtained to teach a grammar school, said township shall allow at least twelve pounds to be raised by rate on all the inhabitants." While we know little of the men who thus resolved, of their names, mode of living, or conditions, this noble record of their devotion to education has illuminated all the later pages of the history of Massachusetts. Three states of

this Union maintained for two generations a character among their sister states as individual and distinct as that of an eminent man among his associates. In proportion as the traits of State character are more marked and resolute, the longer they endure. The influx of new elements among the masses of population in many of our States has subjected this character to modifications, until even the family likeness is in some cases dangerously near to disappearance. Our Northwestern States are so miscellaneously settled, and are still so young, that no artist can yet venture to draw a portrait which will be recognized as faithful a half century hence. But for the last quarter of a century the pulses of Iowa, and her impulses, have been so thoroughly felt, her tendencies and the influences working in her development are so clearly shown, as to justify the indulgence of a noble hope of her future. Her liberality in the support of schools, and of religious and charitable institutions, the superiority of her people in the comparative tables of popular education, the more equal diffusion of wealth and comfort within her borders, her unquestioned love of liberty, temperance, and justice, and her military and civil courage in their maintenance, so distinguish her as to lend a halo to the brightest promise of coming history.

The dangerous influences which threaten to defeat [this promise are visible, and demand your vigorous activity to suppress them. The State will rise no higher than the motives and the intellect of the men who in all ranks most prominently represent it. If you allow your offices to be sold as patronage, or claimed as a personal right, and fill them in response to personal solicitation, or party dictation, without regard to fitness, you fail in your duty to the State. If you listen to demagogues who appeal to prejudice against measures of justice, who defame the character of your elected officers to gratify malice or to obtain office for themselves, you prepare the way for the degradation of all public life, and for the humiliation of

the State itself. Some new Peter-the-hermit will yet arise among the people to preach a new crusade against the system of falsehood, forgery and defamation, which are still tolerated as weapons of political warfare. Let your curse rest upon them, and your heel crush them out. They degrade us in the eyes of all foreign nations, and they insult the purity and patriotism of our own people. As your vengeance should be swift upon those who are proved corrupt, so let it fall with the speed of a thunderbolt upon the forgers and libellers who fear not to corrupt the public mind with falsehood, and defame the reputation of the State and Nation by reckless assaults upon their representative officers.

Let your indignation also flow in full tide against the corrupters of the ballot box. Our laws are not yet severe enough against these enemies of the Republic. Tricks and deceptions which rob the voter of his sovereign right are not adequately punished. Fraudulent tickets are repeatedly delivered to the ignorant and unwary. And yet a single vote has been known to shape the policy of a State. The ballot is the crown of popular sovereignty, and it should be guarded with a care like that bestowed upon the jeweled emblem with which kings go to their coronation.

What influence will the five hundred and seventy periodical presses of Iowa exert upon the future character of our State? What will this enormous power for good or evil do to form the reputation and build up an honorable name and fame for our home Republic? Shall their columns be filled with a mixture of good and evil, of truth and falsehood, that they may thrive by ministering to all depraved as well as elevated tastes? The preaching of your churches and the teaching of your schools will be robbed of half their educational force, if the press fails to contribute its share to the elevation of public sentiment. The hurried demand of the daily page upon overtaxed brains leads too often to recklessness of

assertion, to viciousness of argument, and even to the invention of facts, while verification of their statements awaits the leisure of their author. Meanwhile the public mind is led astray, and public opinion in part corrupted. The great majority of their issues, it is willingly believed, are useful instructors among the moral forces of the community. But from this central hearthstone of the State we to-day invoke them all to recognize a higher responsibility to truth and justice, a more thorough emancipation from prejudice of party and of person, and a deeper appreciation of their influence upon the destinies of Iowa.

Formidable social and economic questions have in recent years risen in the political horizon, to which we direct our troubled gaze as we should look at some unknown comet stretching across the heavens. The simpler manners and the greater equality of fortunes have passed away. The progress of our race in this nineteenth century has been so rapid, and signal discoveries of science occur so frequently, that when we pause to look backward along the line of our own advance we are filled with astonishment. The venerable man of four score years who may listen here to-day knew a time when no boat was propelled by steam; while now all great seas and all inland waters are vexed by their ceaseless wheels. The mature man of three score years knew a time when no vehicle for freight or passengers moved rapidly on iron rails, governed by an unseen force; while now their noise disturbs the tranquility of two continents. Men of still more vigorous years know a time when electricity was an unchained force; while now, subjected to our use, messages are instantaneously transmitted by it thousands of miles over land and under seas, annihilating time and outspeeding the coursers of the sun. The boy still at school, with satchel slung upon his shoulders, remembers the time when the human voice was lost at a short radius in the atmosphere; where now it travels, guided by a delicate wire, for scores of

miles, and speaks gently in the ear which listens, even beyond the horizon of the human eye. Such events, so strange, so wonderful, occurring within our own time, surpass the imaginative compass of an Arab story, and fill us with awe and amazement. Unable to forecast the productive future, we tremble as its opening scenes are displayed to our bewildered sight. We ask what is to be the effect of the enormous accumulations of wealth rendered possible by the numerous amazing inventions of man? What shall be the fate of LABOR, which applies all these discoveries to the production of this vast wealth? Shall it share in the improvement of human conditions, or be left to retrogradation? Remembering that extreme wealth and extreme poverty are the two widely separated ends of the human chain, shall the great middle classes which so largely outnumber both the others, reconcile the rights of one with the interests of the other, and so maintain our peaceful development? These pregnant questions, gentlemen, will demand your unimpassioned thought for years to come, for they must in part be hereafter resolved by legislation within the halls of which you this day take possession. The country is feeling its way steadily toward their solution. Let Patience be a welcome guest at your deliberations, and let Justice control them. For Justice is the richest jewel in the crown of government—justice to the low, justice to the high, justice to all. Legislation must not take away from industry, activity and extraordinary capacity the legitimate earnings of these superior qualities; for that would be to discourage the best labor, and to retard the advance of society. Nor, on the other hand, must it give to superior faculty such advantages as will enable it to oppress humbler natures, or deprive them of their fair protection, and their fitting share in the world's advance. The just principle *must* be found upon which proper social legislation shall be based. It may possibly be recognized by analogy to the care bestowed by governments upon those in its military ser-

vice who are wounded or diseased in the line of duty. It may be found in the compulsory and regular contribution from the profits of the enterprise to a beneficial fund; or in the principles of an insurance association. Voluntary efforts of enlightened wealth are already opening the way, and blazing the path of future legislation. The principles of justice, reinforced by the sentiment of Christianity, will surely lead our fair-minded countrymen to the settlement of these questions without the violence and disorder which are so dangerously distracting the older nations of Europe.

We, gentlemen, shall soon pass from the stage of public action. The hope of the country will soon pass to the next generation. The fair flower of Iowa, now in her public schools or just leaping the fences into political life, will claim the control of the destinies of the State. I appeal to them to avoid the common road which leads through the passions and prejudices of men; and to choose the path which demands higher courage, but which leads assuredly to an honorable fame. The generosity of their years should easily lead them to resist the despotism of the strong, as well as to scorn the ways of the demagogue. To gain greatness for themselves or for their State, they must be guided by the nobler sentiments of the human heart and by the higher qualities of the human intellect. It is of the very nature of greatness that it represents these qualities, as it is developed by them. But it is of the very nature of prejudice and passion that they cannot endure in leadership; they must die of the moral mephitic gasses which are evolved out of their own active heat. You may try to convert them to a better nature, but try not at all to build yourself upon them. They may make a Marat, who flooded a city with blood; but never a Napoleon, who curbed and conquered them, and organized an empire upon their fall. Truth alone is indestructible.

“The eternal years of God are hers,”

as well in politics as in religion. Truth and you together are

stronger than you and all the hosts of error in company. In a time of great passion and excitement John Milton wrote, "I care not what error is let loose into the field, so Truth be left free to combat it." One of the noblest things in this contest against popular error and prejudice on the one hand and against the prejudices of organized wealth and position on the other, to which I summon the youth of Iowa, is found in the manly qualities of courage and personal independence which it evokes. Slaves of party and slaves of self interest and prejudice abound, and will threaten you with defeat if you take sides against them for public justice and public honor in times of difficulty. But the battle, though prolonged, is surely won in the end for truth and justice. It is not the skirmish, but the final victory, which wins the chaplet of immortality. We send these messages to-day from beneath this dome to the blossoming manhood of our State, now in university, college and schools, who shall soon occupy our places in this Capitol, and shall here direct the affairs and establish the fame of a greater State.

One sentiment more demands expression under these arches as they are dedicated to future centuries. Need I say to you, men of Iowa, who have so recently and so bountifully given your treasure and your blood to maintain it, that the strongest hope of the future welfare of our State, under favor of the Almighty, is in the perpetuity of the National Union. In that well-rounded circle we dwell secure. Detached from that bond, a broken fragment, we should be the prey alike of internal faction and of faithless and transient external alliances. Jealousies of rivals on every side, obstructed intercourse, commercial exactions, and frontier broils, would impoverish the people, excite their passions, and destroy their peace. In the end we should fall like the petty Republics of Greece under foreign domination, or like Rome seek relief from domestic faction in submission to a despot's rule. The rallying cry of all patriots

must still be, the CONSTITUTION AND THE UNION. The victories of war and the glories of peace, won under the common flag, must never be divided. May each generation transmit from these halls to its succeeding generation the watchword: Let the UNION remain forever. When, in 1851, being the seventy-sixth year of our Independence, the corner-stone was laid for the extension of the United States Capitol, Mr. Webster deposited a memorial of the ceremony, in which he declared that if it should thereafter be the will of God that the structure should fall from its base and its foundations be upturned, that memorial should make it known that the Union of the States then stood firm, and the Constitution unimpaired, and grown stronger in the affections of the people than ever before.

Standing to-day in this noble presence of all departments of the government, Legislative, Executive and Judicial, and of the people of the State, I would enlarge the lofty words of that great statesman. If it shall hereafter be the will of God that the pillars and domes, towers and walls of this great structure shall fall prostrate, and even its foundations be buried from the eyes of men, be it known that at this time, in the one hundred and eighth year of our Independence, the UNION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, having withstood the shock of two foreign wars, and of one more terrible civil war, STILL stands firm, and more strongly consolidated than ever before, having been cemented by blood; that their Constitution still exists unimpaired, and even improved by the introduction of universal human liberty within its entire jurisdiction; and with more than its original usefulness and glory; that it grows every day stronger in the affections of the great body of the American people, and attracts more and more the admiration of the world. And all here assembled, whether belonging to public or private life, with hearts devoutly thankful to Almighty God for the preservation of the liberty and the

happiness of the country, and for the great prosperity of the State, unite in sincere and fervent prayers that these walls and arches, domes and towers, columns and capitals, may endure so long as the Republic and Liberty survive.

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